

Hadrian's Villa

UNESCO World Heritage Site

Villa Adriana (Tivoli)	
Name as inscribed on the World Heritage List ^[1]	
	
Country	Italy
Type	Cultural
Criteria	i, ii, iii
Reference	907 ^[2]
UNESCO region ^[3]	Europe
Inscription history	
Inscription	1999 (23rd Session)

The **Hadrian's Villa** (**Villa Adriana** in Italian) is a large Roman archaeological complex at Tivoli, Italy.

History

The villa was constructed at Tibur (modern-day Tivoli) as a retreat from Rome for Roman Emperor Hadrian during the second and third decades of the 2nd century AD. Hadrian was said to dislike the palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome, leading to the construction of the retreat. During the later years of his reign, he actually governed the empire from the villa. A large court therefore lived there permanently. The postal service kept it in contact with Rome 18 miles (29 km) away.

After Hadrian, the villa was used by his various successors. During the decline of the Roman Empire the villa fell into disuse and was partially ruined. In the 16th century Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este had much of the marble and statues in Hadrian's villa removed to decorate his own Villa d'Este located nearby.

Structure and architecture

Hadrian's villa was a complex of over 30 buildings, covering an area of at least 1 square kilometre (c. 250 acres) of which much is still unexcavated. The villa was the greatest Roman example of an Alexandrian garden, recreating a sacred landscape. The complex included palaces, several *thermae*, theatre, temples, libraries, state rooms and quarters for courtiers, praetorians and slaves.



The ruins of Hadrian's Villa in their present state

The Villa shows echoes of many different architectural orders, mostly Greek and Egyptian. Hadrian, a very well travelled emperor, borrowed these designs, such as the caryatids by the Canopus, along with the statues beside them depicting the Egyptian dwarf and fertility god, Bes. A Greek so called "Maritime Theatre" exhibits classical ionic style, whereas the domes of the main buildings as well as the corinthian arches of the Canopus and Serapeum show clear Roman architecture. Hadrian's biography states that areas in the villa were named after places Hadrian saw during his travels. Only a few places mentioned in the biography can be accurately correlated with the present-day ruins.

One of the most striking and best preserved parts of the Villa are a pool and an artificial grotto which were named Canopus and Serapeum, respectively. Canopus was an Egyptian city where a temple (Serapeum) was dedicated to the god Serapis. However, the architecture is Greek influenced (typical in Roman architecture of the High and Late Empire) as seen in the Corinthian columns and the copies of famous Greek statues that surround the pool. One anecdote

involves the Serapeum and its peculiarly-shaped dome. A prominent architect of the day, Apollodorus of Damascus, dismisses Hadrian's designs, comparing the dome on Serapeum to a "pumpkin". The full quote is "Go away and draw your pumpkins. You know nothing about these [architectural] matters." Once Hadrian became emperor, Apollodorus was exiled and later put to death.

An interesting structure in the Villa is the so-called "Maritime Theatre". It consists of a round portico with a barrel vault supported by pillars. Inside the portico was a ring-shaped pool with a central island. During the ancient times the island was connected to the portico by two drawbridges. On the island sits a small Roman house complete with an atrium, a library, a triclinium and small baths. The area was probably used by the emperor as a retreat from the busy life at the court.

The villa utilizes numerous architectural styles and innovations. The domes of the steam baths have circular holes on the apex to allow steam to escape. This is reminiscent of the Pantheon, also built by Hadrian. The area has a network of underground tunnels. The tunnels were mostly used to transport servants and goods from one area to another.

In 1998 the remains of what archaeologists claimed to be the monumental tomb of Antinous, or a temple to him, were discovered at the Villa.^[4]



Grand Thermae

Sculptures and artworks

Many beautiful artifacts have been unearthed and restored at the Villa, such as marble statues of Antinous, Hadrian's deified lover, accidentally drowned in Egypt, and mosaics from the theatre and baths. A lifelike mosaic depicted a group of doves around a bowl, with one drinking, seems to be a copy of a work by Sosus of Pergamon as described by Pliny the Elder. It has in turn been widely copied.^[5] Many copies of Greek statues (e.g. the Wounded Amazon) have been found, and even Egyptian-style interpretations of Roman gods and vice versa. Most of these have been taken to Rome for preservation and restoration, and can be seen at the Musei Capitolini or the Musei Vaticani. However, many were also excavated in the 18th century by antiquities dealers such as Piranesi and Gavin Hamilton to sell to Grand Tourists and antiquarians such as Charles Towneley, and so are in major antiquities collections elsewhere in Europe and North America.

Artworks found in the Villa include:

- Discobolus
- *Dove Basin* mosaic, copy of a famous Hellenistic mosaic, Capitoline Museums
- *Diana of Versailles*, Louvre
- *Crouching Venus*
- *Capitoline Antinous*
- *Young Centaur* and *Old Centaur* (Capitoline versions)



Theatrical masks of Tragedy and Comedy in refined mosaic, from the villa (Capitoline Museum, Rome)

Present-day significance

Hadrian's Villa is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and important cultural and archaeological site. It is also a major tourist destination along with the nearby Villa d'Este and the town of Tivoli. The Academy of the villa was placed on the 100 Most Endangered Sites 2006 list of the World Monuments Watch because of the rapid deterioration of the ruins.



The Maritime Theatre

Further reading

- A. Betori, Z. Mari, 'Villa Adriana, edificio circolare noto come Sepolcro o Tomba: campagna di scavo 2004: breve sintesi dei risultati', in *Journal of Fasti Online*, www.fastionline.org/docs/2004-14.pdf
- *Hadrien empereur et architecte. La Villa d'Hadrien: tradition et modernité d'un paysage culturel. Actes du Colloque international organisé par le Centre Culturel du Pantheon* (2002. Geneva)
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- *Hadrien: trésor d'une villa impériale*, ed. J. Charles-Gaffiot, H. Lavagne [exhibition catalogue, Paris] (1999. Milan)
- W. L. MacDonald and J. A. Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and its legacy* (1995)
- A. Giubilei, 'Il Conte Fede e la Villa Adriana: storia di una collezione d'arte', in *Atti e Memorie della Società Tiburtina di Storia e d'arte*; 68 (1995), p.81-121
- J. Raeder, *Die Statuarische Ausstattung Der Villa Hadriana Bei Tivoli* (1983)
- R. Lanciani, *La Villa Adriana* (1906)

References

- [1] <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>
- [2] <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/907>
- [3] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?search=&search_by_country=&type=&media=&region=&order=region
- [4] Mari, Zaccaria and Sgalambro, Sergio: *The Antinoeion of Hadrian's Villa: Interpretation and Architectural Reconstruction*, American Journal of Archaeology, Vol 3, No 1, Jan 2007.
- [5] Drabble, Margaret (2009-09-16). *The Pattern in the Carpet: A Personal History with Jigsaws* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=PAihUMKTuWMC&pg=PA292>). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. p. 292. ISBN 978-0-547-24144-9. . Retrieved 2012-10-24.

External links

- Tivoli - Hadrian's Villa (<http://www.tibursuperbum.it/eng/monumenti/villaadriana/index.htm>)
 - Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli, Rome (<http://www.villa-adriana.net/>)
 - Great Buildings: Hadrian's Villa (http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Hadrians_Villa.html)
 - Caryatids at the Canopus View (<http://www.homewalldecorations.com/art/canvas/canopus-hadrians-villa-tivoli>)
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